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- (1) U.S. Trafficking in Persons Reports urges Japan to improve

MAINICHI ONLINE NEWS (Full)
June 5, 2008, 12:20

Kenichi Komatsu, Washington

The U.S. State Department yesterday released its Annual Trafficking in Persons Report concerning international trafficking in persons for prostitution and forced labor. In the Annual Trafficking in Persons Report 2004, Japan had been designated as a Tier 2 Watch List country, but since 2005 Japan has been categorized as a Tier 2 country and has been removed from the Watch List for four years in a row. But this year's report, referring to Japan, said that Japan "has failed to take protective measures fully for victims of trafficking, and that Japan has failed to improve law enforcement related to punishing criminals." In addition, the report mentioned the foreign trainee system and urged the Japanese government to improve it, noting, "Reportedly, the system serves to exploit foreign workers."

The annual report began to be released in 2001, when the Bush administration came into being. This year's report covers 170 countries and regions. The countries that are designated as the best group are 29 countries and a region, such as Britain, South Korea, and Hong Kong. The countries that are placed in the worst group are 14 countries, including North Korea, Myanmar (Burma), and Iran.

As for China, the report noted that female defectors from North Korea have been forced into prostitution, marriage, and slave labor. Furthermore, the report noted that forced labor involving children was a serious problem in China and designated China as a Tier 2 Watch List country.

(2) Former U.S. POW group chief calls for "establishing a fund" for reconciliation

ASAHI (Page 14) (Full)
Eve., June 4, 2008

Lester Tenney (87), the chairman of an organization of former prisoners of war (POWs) who were forced into slave labor after being captured by the former Imperial Japanese Army in World War II, arrived in Japan. On the afternoon of June 4, Tenney is to meet with Japanese lawmakers, including Upper House President Satsuki Eda, and to ask them to work on the Japanese government to acknowledge the cruel treatment of POWs and to establish a reconciliation fund.

Tenney was taken prisoner by the former Japanese Imperial Army in the Philippines in 1942 and he survived the Bataan Death March. In 1943, he was sent to a POW camp in Omuta, Fukuoka Prefecture and forced to do slave labor at a Mitsui-Miike coal mine until Japan's defeat in the war. Tenney filed a lawsuit in the U.S. seeking compensation and an apology from the Japanese company, but in 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court turned down his case, noting, "The U.S. waived the right to claim under the San Francisco Peace Treaty with Japan."

This May, Tenney assumed the post of chairman of the former POW organization American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor. He said this organization will be dissolved next May because the advanced age of the members. As the last chairman of the organization, he came to Japan, paid for by the contributions of his friends, in order to call on the Japanese government and companies associated with the POW issue to move to establish a fund. Tenney also has asked to meet with Prime Minister Fukuda.

On June 3, Tenney visited the Wadatsumi no Koe Memorial Hall, (located in Tokyo's Bunkyo Ward), which displays the belongings of students killed in the war. In a speech, Tenney said, "I will not ask for compensation. It is my hope that Japan will invite former POWs and their family members to Japan so that Americans and Japanese can understand each other and will never repeat such a tragedy." He is appealing for the creation of a fund for reconciliation and friendship.

(3) Government to send survey mission to Afghanistan to determine feasibility of dispatching GSDF there

ASAHI NET (Full)
13:15, June 5, 2008

The government has begun coordination for sending shortly a survey

mission composed of officials in charge from the Foreign and Defense Ministries to Afghanistan in order to determine the feasibility of dispatching ground troops there for the reconstruction of that country, in addition to the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling operation in the Indian Ocean, according to several government sources.

Dispatching ground troops to Afghanistan requires a new law. A high-ranking government official has defined the planned mission as an administrative survey to determine the conditions, rather than a survey based on the dispatch of GSDF troops. DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa takes a positive view about joining the International Security

Assistance Force (ISAF). Given the situation, the step also seems to aim at calling on the DPJ for debate on security affairs, such as a permanent law (general law) for the overseas dispatch of the SDF toward the next extraordinary Diet session in the fall.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura in a press conference earlier today said: "Over 40 countries have sent troops (to Afghanistan). Whether or not to conduct an on-site survey is included in a wide-range of subjects for study." Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, too, made the following comment on June 1 about sending the GSDF: "We can do it if conditions are met for Japan's cooperation. I have been thinking of such a possibility at all times."

(4) DPJ to submit censure motion against Fukuda next week, to underscore confrontational stance

NIKKEI ONLINE
June 5, 2008, 1:30 PM

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) decided today to submit a censure motion against Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda to the House of Councillors next week. With the last day of the ongoing Diet session just around the corner, the main opposition has now judged it necessary to underscore its confrontational stance against the ruling coalition over such issues as the new health care system for people aged 75 or older. The Japanese Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party have decided to support the DPJ policy. A censure motion against the prime minister is now likely to be adopted for the first time.

Despite the fact that there are cautious views in other opposition parties about the submission, a senior DPJ member clearly said this morning: "The (DPJ's) decision to submit a motion remains unchanged." The party has decided to submit a motion upon coordinating views with other three opposition parties. Even if no agreement is reached, the party intends to go ahead with the plan even independently. As for the timing for the submission, the party eyes early next week. But Diet deliberations will inevitably be delayed after the submission, and debate on the bills which the DPJ is aiming to pass in the current Diet session and the planned party head talks will be inevitably affected. Given this, some members suggest submitting a motion in the latter half of next week.

Although a number of DPJ members, particularly Upper House members, had been calling for shelving the submission during the current Diet session. However, since President Ichiro Ozawa began to look into the possibility in a positive manner with the aim of underscoring the party's confrontational stance, the party made a policy switch. In a meeting of the secretaries general of opposition parties yesterday, cautious views were presented from other opposition parties. Despite such voices, the DPJ made the decision.

(5) DPJ to submit censure motion against Fukuda to play up confrontational stance

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
June 5, 2008

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) decided yesterday to submit a censure motion against Prime Minister to the House of Councillors. Recently, a reconciliation mood is generating as the main opposition has agreed with the ruling coalition on a bill amending the National Civil Service Law and other matters just before the current Diet

session ends on June 15. The DPJ came up with the decision, stemming from the judgment that unless the DPJ plays up a confrontational stance against the Fukuda administration, the party might be marginalized as the main opposition. Meanwhile, the government and the ruling camp intend to put it on the side even if a motion is submitted. Given this, some in the opposition bloc have voiced doubts about its political effect.

In a party executive meeting yesterday, Deputy President Naoto Kan touched off the issue, saying: "The (Lake Toya) Summit in Hokkaido and the Beijing Olympics will be held soon. If the current Diet session ends smoothly, people might forget the fiascos over the health insurance system for people aged 75 or older and special tax revenues for highway construction and maintenance. We should present a censure motion." Upper House Chairman Azuma Koshiishi echoed Kan. President Ozawa also stressed: "When I travel across the nation, many local residents ask me to do something about the new health insurance system for the elderly. I wonder if it is all right to end the Diet session smoothly." Reflecting such voices, the party made the decision.

During the current session, the DPJ considered submitting a censure motion when the provisional gasoline tax rate was revived and on other occasions. But a censure motion has no legal binding power. Even if a motion is adopted, if the prime minister ignores it, it will be worth nothing. For such reasons, the party sidestepped a decision.

In the final phase of the session, the DPJ has decided to submit a motion, but the party has yet to determine the best time and the main reason for the submission.

In a meeting of the secretaries general of four opposition parties yesterday, Japanese Communist Party Secretary General Ichida said: "If a censure motion is adopted, we will become unable discuss matters with the prime minister. Are you keeping in mind such a situation in making the suggestion?" DPJ Secretary General Hatoyama replied: "Under the principle of one censure motion against one cabinet, it will naturally become impossible to hold deliberations." But there was a scene in which Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Kenji Yamaoka denied the Hatoyama remark, saying: "We have not considered to that extent."

People's New Party Secretary General Hisaoki Kamei said: "If that (the submission of a censure motion) end with just a ceremony, the motion will become meaningless." A senior DPJ member also stressed: "It is impossible to obtain public understanding. The idea is off the point."

A senior Liberal Democratic Party member said: "If the censure motion is adopted, the government and the ruling coalition will disregard it."

In response to a question in informal talks with accompanying reporters in Rome on the 4th about what response he would make if the censure motion is adopted, Fukuda replied:

"I have yet to know whether the contents (of the motion) are weighty or are only for pro-forma sake. I will have to make a judgment, depending on the circumstances of the time, including on whether we can seriously respond to it."

Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura told a press conference last evening: "I would like to tell them to do what they want."

(6) Debate on introduction of life imprisonment without parole gaining steam

ASAHI (Page 3) (Excerpts)
June 5, 2008

A supra-partisan movement to introduce life imprisonment without parole is gaining momentum. Both those supporting and opposing capital punishment are aiming to introduce life imprisonment before the lay judge system starts next May.

In late May, the Supra-partisan Group to Consider the Sentencing

System met for the second time in Tokyo.

In the session, House of Representatives member Koichi Kato said: "The discussion should begin with the question of whether or not we should allow lay judges to make decisions on the death penalty." Another Lower House member, Katsuei Hirasawa, warned: "This is not a venue to discuss capital punishment. We should discuss the matter premised on the continuation of capital punishment."

The meeting was also attended by former LDP Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa, DPJ Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama, and New Komeito deputy head Toshiko Hamayotsu. They all argued on different planes. But in a meeting the following week, an agreement was reached smoothly to submit a life imprisonment bill to the next extraordinary Diet session to be convened in the fall. "I'm sure no one will oppose it," Hirasawa said after the meeting.

Life imprisonment legislation was initially aimed at by the Parliamentary League for Abolition of the Death Penalty, headed by Shizuka Kamei. For this reason, the subject of life imprisonment without parole has long been a taboo for those supportive of capital punishment.

But the mood in the capitol district of Nagatacho has changed as a result of a series of executions under Justice Minister Kunio Hatoyama, such as the death sentence for the murder of a mother and her daughter in Hikari City, Yamaguchi Prefecture.

Kato, who last November joined the opposition-dominated Parliamentary League for Abolition of the Death Penalty, wondered if the number of death sentences might increase following the implementation of the lay judge system. He invited Hirasawa, a former police officer who advocates the death penalty, to join the league to discuss the introduction of life imprisonment without parole by setting aside the propriety of the death penalty.

In the wake of the sentence for the Hikari case, Hirasawa thought the gap between capital punishment and life imprisonment was too huge. He decided to join the league, telling Kato that he would quit the group if it began discussing the abolition of the death penalty.

Shizuka Kamei, who has long advocated the abolition of capital punishment, has never mentioned his stock argument in league meetings. "It is high time to make even small progress, which is

better than nothing," Kamei said.

The Supra-partisan Group to Consider the Sentencing System now has some 140 members. Former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori serves as its supreme adviser. More than a half of the members are said to be in favor of the death penalty.

The ongoing discussion on life imprisonment has also cast a shadow on civic groups involved in the movement to abolish the death penalty.

Amnesty International Japan Secretary General Makoto Teranaka commented: "Life imprisonment without parole is something we cannot proactively advocate. Then again, we cannot clearly oppose it as long as it is one option for abolishing capital punishment."

A record-high 1,670 people were serving a life sentence at the end of 2007, according to the Justice Ministry. A person who receives an indefinite prison sentence may be paroled after serving 10 years. The average period of imprisonment before parole has surpassed 30 years. Many calling for the abolition of capital punishment take the view that life imprisonment without parole is as harsh as the death penalty.

To Kato, who played a central role in establishing the supra-partisan group, it is a surprise that the group is moving toward submitting legislation.

A senior LDP lawmaker predicted: "With legislators becoming depressed by the divided Diet which cannot decide on anything, legislation sponsored by the supra-partisan group will attract much attention." In fact, there has been a string of lawmaker-sponsored

legislation, such as the relief law for drug-induced hepatitis C patients and the law to enhance R&D to increase international competitiveness in science and technology.

The Justice Ministry has discounted calls for life imprisonment without parole as a minority opinion peculiar to the opposition bloc. The ministry can no longer ignore the movements of the supra-partisan group led by ruling party members.

(7) Takeo Hiranuma in interview says a citizen-oriented new party is necessary

TOKYO SHIMUBUN (Page 2) (Full)
June 5, 2008

-- What is your view on the present political situation?

Hiranuma: It seems to me that politics that disregards the interests of the people has been conducted due to the politically divided Diet situation. The level of confidence toward all of politics, not just the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), has dropped. After a House of Representatives election, political realignment should be carried out, giving consideration to the public.

-- You have unveiled your plan to form a new party, which would be made up of some 30 members.

Hiranuma: Creating a new party is one of my options, but I would like to avoid a hasty decision. There are calls across the nation

from Hokkaido to Okinawa asking me to start a new trend.

-- You reportedly plan to support 13 people who are expected to run (in the next Lower House election).

Hiranuma: I have been stumping nationwide with the understanding that I should send as many sound conservative politicians as possible to the Diet.

-- How about cooperation with incumbent Diet members?

Hiranuma: I have been keeping in contact with solid conservative forces in the LDP and DPJ. The People's New Party (PNP) is also a gathering of conservative politicians. While doing so, what I should do is to make a new party that would focus on the people.

-- You have continued holding meetings separately with LDP Secretary General Bunmei Ibuki, DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa, and PNP leader Tamisuke Watanuki.

Hiranuma: It is true that I have received offers from various parties.

-- When do you think is the right timing for forming a new party?

Hiranuma: Sometime before the next Lower House election is desirable.

-- When do you predict the Lower House will be dissolved?

Hiranuma: Prime Minister Fukuda will keep going until after the Hokkaido Toyako Summit of Group of Eight countries in July. Once that is over, (the political situation) will probably grow tense.

-- What do you mean by a sound conservative mean?

Hiranuma: It means to drastically reform what should be reformed and to protect thoroughly what should be protected. For example, the Imperial system should not be changed by thoughtless arguments by so-called experts. It is necessary to protect society, so that a commercialism that allows people to make easy money becomes unacceptable. The tendency of the younger the better is also wrong.

-- Do you think voices of the elderly are not being reflected in the present politics?

Hiranuma: That's right. In Japan those seventy five years of age are

called "the advanced aged" because it was rare in ancient times for people to live for seventy years. But we have a longer life span nowadays. So, revising the present employment systems, we should create a society under which senior citizens can make good use of their experiences.

-- Do you have any suggestions for economic policy?

Hiranuma: It is not good for politicians to just talk about such gloomy and depressing stories that a two-percent economic growth is impossible and that a 10 PERCENT tax hike is the only way to improve the economy. Politicians should give the public something to dream for. By adopting a proactive economic policy, the government should reduce the income and investment taxes, but it should not raise the consumption tax rate.

-- There is the view that fiscal austerity is unavoidable since the central and local governments have a huge amount of debts.

Hiranuma: It is said that a consumption tax hike is necessary to reduce a debt of 840 trillion yen held by the state and local governments. After deducting the total amount of foreign currency reserves and U.S. government bonds from the 840 trillion yen, Japan's debt totals 250 trillion yen, which is similar to those of European countries. So, it is unfair that the government has not informed the public of this fact.

(8) Ronten (Point in controversy) column by Hiroyuki Yushita: How to improve relations between Japan and China? Need to explain to the public about how to determine sea boundary

YOMIURI (Page 13) (Full)
June 5, 2008

Hiroyuki Yushita, guest professor of international law and foreign policy at Kyorin University

Following the realization of a visit to Japan by Chinese President Hu Jintao to Japan as a state guest, the Japanese and Chinese governments issued a joint statement saying that the two countries would comprehensively push a strategic, beneficial relationship. Since the two countries are important to each other, their maintaining good relations is very meaningful not only for both sides but also for their neighbors.

On the economic front, Japan and China have already been closely linked to each other with China having become Japan's largest trading partner. At one point in the past, political ties between the two countries were so cold that they were even described as being cool politically but hot economically. It is a delightful change to see that relations have since improved at a fast and broad pace.

Japan sent an international emergency rescue team to the region hit by the Sichuan earthquake. This was appropriate in terms of popular exchanges. I hope to see the Beijing Olympics this summer help the Japanese public to be more interested in China and grassroots-level exchanges to deepen even further.

I served as minister in the Japanese Embassy in Beijing from 1986 through 1988. At the time both the Japanese and Chinese did not understand each other very well. Japan and China are neighbors, and even though they may not like each other, they can't move far away from each other. If both countries associate with each other properly, they can benefit each other as evidently seen in their economic relations. Mutual understanding and trust are both essential in this context.

I take note particularly of the fact that the top leaders of the two countries agreed in their summit meeting recently to promote not only top-level exchanges to facilitate mutual understanding and trust but also a broad-range of exchanges and cooperation, including youth exchanges and defense exchanges in the security field.

In the past, wars constantly occurred between France and Germany, but Europe centering on those two countries established the European Union. This fact may be a good reference for Japan and China.

Meanwhile, Japan and China have some issues to resolve. In order to do so, the shortest way would be for the two countries to share convictions related to where the two countries are heading for, as well as to share convictions about their general standpoints. If the two countries rely on incorrect knowledge and emotional arguments, they would simply fail to resolve the issues in a satisfactory manner.

Good news about those outstanding issues facing the two countries is that the leaders of the two countries declared that they have now obtained some prospects for the issue of exploring gas fields in the East China Sea to be resolved. Reportedly they share the view that they would discuss the issue in detail in weeks ahead and reach agreement as quickly as possible. I hope bilateral negotiations will advance smoothly and clinch a deal.

Yet, there is one thing that concerns me. It is the way mass media are reporting about the sea boundary between Japan and China. They simply report that Japan insists that the median line between Japan and China is set as the sea boundary, while China insists on using the Okinawa Trough as the sea boundary.

Since the end of World War II, international laws concerning the sea went through major changes in succession, but with the adoption in 1982 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, disputes over those international laws were finalized.

China's assertion that the Okinawa Trough should be used as the sea boundary is based on the notion that China's continental shelf naturally extends to the Okinawa Trough. In some cases, this kind of assertion was accepted before the system of establishing exclusive economic zones was introduced in accordance with the above Law of the Sea. But at present, legal precedents by international laws have changed. In the case of demarcating the boundary between the two countries facing each other, the distance from the shore is used as a basis to determine the sea boundary regardless of ocean floor topography. China's assertion in this sense is no longer acceptable.

This fact needs to be properly explained to the peoples of the two countries, or it would become difficult to resolve the issue appropriately.

Hiroyuki Yushita: is 72 years old and was former ambassador to the Philippines

SCHIEFFER